

# NFCUS Seminar

Held at Guelph . . .



HENRY REMPEL

Alberta delegates to the Seminar of the National Federation of Canadian University Students held during the first week of Sept. in Guelph, Ont., were: Henry Rempel, arts 3; Trudy Govier, arts 2; Robin Hunter, arts 4; John Humphreys, arts 4; Hugh Robertson, arts 4; Roger Pretty, eng 4. The topic of the Seminar was covered by the generality "Technology and Man." In this feature Henry Rempel expresses the reactions of the delegates to the Seminar.



Everybody had a whale of a good time at the NFCUS Seminar in Guelph. Well, almost everybody. For when the local chairman, midway through the conference, said, "Anybody here who is not having a whale of a good time please stand up," only two delegates rose, and one of these later admitted that he had done so only to give the real lone dissenter moral support.

As far as I could tell though, this was not the purpose for which the seminar was convened. The seminar topic was "Technology and Man", and we had come to Guelph to learn about and discuss that topic with other students from across Canada, or in the more eloquent phrasing of "It's purpose is . . . to extend the Alberta delegate Roger Pretty, all-too-close visible horizon of a student on a campus such as ours, by bringing several students from all parts of Canada together." This purpose was certainly accomplished in discussions with other delegates both formally arranged and impromptu.

### Superficial Remarks Made

The speakers and panelists, who were undoubtedly some of the outstanding men in professional,

business, and academic fields in eastern Canada, tended, however, to be general and superficial in their remarks; there was not as much "meat" in their talks as there could have been. I suspect that this was done deliberately by some panelists, who just wanted to outline some basic problems in a general way to set us thinking about them. While this approach is not the worst one, most of us did not feel that the panelists succeeded in carrying it off.

For example, Prof. Couse of Carleton University, a member of the opening panel on "The Relation of Technology to Progress" made the point that an increasing amount of self-discipline was necessary in an age of technology, but he did not clearly specify why it was or what steps we could take to discipline ourselves.

Or Mr. Bernard Ostry, research director of Social Sciences Research Council, speaking in a panel on the "Aim of Education" suggested that one of these aims should be to make man more civilized. He was most enlightening on what government and society could do to improve the educational process, e.g. starting education earlier and establishing kindergartens; but a definition of civilization and any specific ideas on how education could make men more civilized were conspicuous only by their absence.

Part of the fault lay with the organization of the panels. Panelists had been asked to make their speeches brief, about 10-15 minutes each. The rationale behind this evidently was to allow the panelists opportunity for interaction and argument after each member had given his main speech. I was amazed and disappointed at the lack of this in most of the panels. The members seemed to be in almost complete agreement with one another, and one or two polite questions between panelists was sometimes all of the dialogue that we in the audience were treated to.

### Capital and Labor Agree

Even the capitalist Mr. F. Eugène Therrien, president of L'Economie mutuelle d'assurance, and the labor leader, Mr. Claude Jodoin, president of the Canadian Labor Congress, agreed on a surprising number of points, when discussing "The Impact of Automation"; but this panel, rounded out by Prof. William Line of the University of Toronto, discussed many more points of controversy than any of the others. I thought that Mr. Jodoin was especially effective in answering the challenges put to him. Re the problem of featherbedding, Mr. Jodoin could hardly deny that there is a certain amount of it in the labor side of industry, but he also pointed to some examples of similar practice in executive suites. Re the problem of use of leisure time, Mr. Jodoin pointed to a CLC-operated school in Montreal designed to educate workers for more constructive use of their leisure.

### Enlightening Speakers

The main speakers were generally more enlightening than the panelists. This was largely because they had considerably more time—the average speech lasted 50 minutes to one hour—than did each individual panelist to elaborate on their chosen topics.

Some speakers also tended to be vague. They preferred giving a general survey of their topics to taking up a few important aspects and then presenting a concentrated discussion on this basis. Controversial areas were sometimes avoided. Some delegates also felt that both panelists and speakers dwelt too much on technology and not enough on man.

The above analysis applied in part to the first main speaker of the conference, Dr. Léon Lortie, secretary-general of the University of Montreal, who spoke on "The History of Technology." It is very easy to avoid controversy with such a topic and to give only a brief survey of the chief technological highlights of the last

few thousand years. Dr. Lortie gave us a little more. He did attempt a definition of technology: the application of science and a way of thinking that depends on the use of machines.

### Fine Arts Mere Crafts?

He entered the realm of controversy when he claimed that the fine arts became merely crafts in that great era of technological progress, the nineteenth century. And one of the technological highlights he mentioned was the recent invention of a machine which can correct its own mistakes and which appears to think—something that should give us cause to think about where we are going in an age when it is considered more scientific to work in terms of probability rather than certainty.

Dr. Deutsch, vice-principal of Queen's University was one of the least controversial speakers on the seminar agenda. A principal

theme of his speech, "Technology and the Economy", was that machines are continually creating new types of jobs, a process which is going on at a much faster rate than we can train new men for them. Major shifts in the pattern of employment, e.g. a decreased demand for semi-skilled laborers, and even chronic severe unemployment in some areas will be the result. All this is practically indisputable. Few of us came there looking for pat solutions to problems like this one, but we did expect a little more than Dr. Deutsch's talk of "needed adjustments" to these new situations.

Several other ideas thrown out by speakers and panelists were worthy of note. Prof. Matthew, department of soils, Ontario Agricultural College: Agriculture is the basis of a progressive civilization. In modern times man has time to think; he need not spend all his time raising or searching for food, because he now has a surplus of it. Modern man has developed an objective in life.

## The Canadian Spirit

By Janis Kostash

A Canadian group with Canadian spirit, the Travellers, are making people realize that being a Canadian carries a meaning.

Through the music they choose, they carry a subtle but strong appeal for unity and for pride. A liberal mingling of French-Canadian songs and those originating from the other provinces suggest a nation with its own folk heritage.

### 10-YEAR TRAVELLERS

This Toronto group has been creating its appeal for ten years.

Organized in 1953, it has since been living up to its name—a recent trip to the Soviet Union, extensive tours through Canada and visits to the United States "to make Americans aware of Canadian folklore."

Currently the group is appearing as the first in a series of performers on a circuit of five western Canadian universities. The four singers are enthusiastic about their audience preference—the "college crowd."

### RESPOND TO MOOD

They find a university group eager to catch the more subtle points, and to respond when a mood is set. A standing ovation given the Travellers at the University of Saskatchewan, Regina, indicates a mutual enthusiasm—audience for singers, also.

Simone Johnston, "the pert and pretty one," made a discouraging



SIMONE JOHNSTON